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ABSTRACT

The District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 created a grant program with the purpose of expanding higher education choices for college-bound District of Columbia residents. This program, the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) Program, addressed the concern that D.C. students were at a disadvantage because the District of Columbia lacks a state university system. TAG allows undergraduates to attend eligible public universities and colleges nationwide at in-state tuition rates and provides smaller grants for students to attend private institutions in the District of Columbia and private historically black colleges and universities. The General Accounting Office (GAO) is required by the College Access Act to monitor the effects of the grant program on eligible students and assess the impact of the program on the University of the District of Columbia, which does not participate in TAG because in-state tuition is already available to D.C. residents. Data are from applicant data for the TAG program for 2000-2001 and a survey of parents (response rate, 42%) of 516 applicants who did not use the program. Twenty-one percent of grant-eligible applicants who did not use the funding may have faced other barriers to college access, especially college entrance examination score requirements. The grant can only be applied to tuition, and in many cases other college costs including room and board may have put institutions out of reach of applicants. Overall, the knowledge level about the TAG program appears adequate. The absence of minority outreach programs on the part of institutions contributes to the low use of TAG grants. The TAG program appears to have had little effect on enrollment at the University of the District of Columbia in its first year of operation. Overall, participating institutions report few problems with TAG participation. Five appendixes contain notes on the study scope and methodology, a list of participating colleges and universities, comments from the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the University of the District of Columbia, and a list of GAO contacts and staff. (SLD)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Committees and the Mayor of the District of Columbia

January 2002

D.C. TUITION ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Program May Increase College Choices, but a Few Program Procedures May Hinder Grant Receipt for Some Residents

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Abbreviations

GPA	grade point average
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
D.C. CAP	D.C. College Access Program
IG	Inspector General
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
TAG	Tuition Assistance Grant
UDC	University of the District of Columbia

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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

January 31, 2002

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin, Chairman
The Honorable George V. Voinovich,
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
Restructuring, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Constance A. Morella, Chairwoman
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton,
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Anthony A. Williams
The Mayor of the District of Columbia

With the enactment of the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-98), the Congress created a grant program with the purpose of expanding higher education choices for college-bound District of Columbia (D.C.) residents in an effort to stabilize the city's population and tax base. This program, the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) Program, addressed a concern that D.C. students were at a disadvantage in their postsecondary school choices because D.C. lacks a state university system.[1] The TAG Program allows undergraduate students to attend eligible public universities and colleges nationwide at in-state tuition rates and provides smaller grants for students to attend private institutions in the D.C. metropolitan area and private Historically Black Colleges and

[1]D.C. has only one public postsecondary institution, the University of the District of Columbia, which was created in 1977 when D.C. Teacher's College, the Federal City College and the Washington Technical Institute were combined into a single institution. The University of the District of Columbia currently offers certificate, 2-year, 4-year, and graduate degree programs to students.

Universities (HBCUs) in Maryland and Virginia.[2] In the TAG Program's first year, 3,500 individuals applied for the grants and nearly 2,500 were found eligible for the grants.

The College Access Act (the act) mandates that we monitor the effects of the grant program on eligible students and assess the impact of the program on enrollment at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), which is ineligible to participate in the TAG Program because in-state tuition rates are already available to D.C. residents. In addition, because some institutions voiced concerns regarding some of the administrative requirements that the initial program regulations placed on participating institutions,[3] Senator Voinovich requested that we expand our study to include a review of program administration. We focused our work on answering the following questions:

- To what extent did eligible applicants who did not use the grant potentially experience barriers to college access at the eligible public and private institutions due to factors such as enrollment caps, entrance requirements, and the absence of minority outreach programs?
- How did enrollment at UDC change during the initial year of the grant program, and do UDC and the TAG Program serve similar freshmen populations?
- What program administration issues, if any, could potentially hinder program operations?

In conducting this work, we examined applicant data from the TAG Program for academic year 2000-01, the first year of the grant program, and surveyed parents of those applicants who did not use the grant. We had a response rate of 42 percent for our parent survey. This response rate

[2]In addition to the criterion related to the location of eligible institutions, to be eligible, an institution must meet the definition of an "institution of higher education" and be eligible to participate in the student financial assistance programs under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Examples of institutions that meet this definition include institutions that (1) are public or other nonprofit institutions, (2) admit students with a secondary school graduation certificate or equivalent, and (3) have either been accredited or granted a pre-accreditation status by a national accrediting agency.

[3]Some institutions were concerned with the institutional requirements contained in the initial program regulations, including the requirements that institutions conduct an annual compliance audit, maintain records that in some cases duplicate records held by the program office, confirm student eligibility, disseminate information about the program to students, and use the federal government's financial aid refund policy, rather than their own institution's refund policy, when a student drops out of school during the school term.

is too low to permit us to consider the survey results to be representative of the situations of all eligible applicants who did not use the grant. Nevertheless, the information that the parents provided regarding the applicants gives an indication of why at least some applicants did not use the grant. We examined data from eligible institutions, D.C. public schools, UDC, and college guide books. We also surveyed institutions that participated in the TAG Program in academic year 2000-01. In addition, we interviewed various federal, university, and D.C. government officials and reviewed program office files. Appendix I further describes our scope and methodology. We conducted our review between January and August 2001 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

Twenty-one percent of grant-eligible applicants who did not use the funding to attend a participating college or university may have faced barriers to college access due to factors such as entrance requirements and the absence of minority outreach programs. Whether enrollment caps at colleges posed a barrier for applicants is unclear. In the first year of the grant program, 516 of the nearly 2,500 eligible applicants did not use the grant. To understand why they had not used the grant, we requested the grade point average (GPA) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores for 290 of these applicants—those who had recently graduated from a D.C. public high school[4] —and found that some of them may have faced barriers due to college entrance requirements. Because data on entrance requirements were not readily available, we used average freshmen high school GPA and SAT scores as a proxy for college entrance requirements. For example, the average GPA for 183 of the applicants for whom data were available was 2.36, whereas entering freshmen at a majority of the schools that the applicants wanted to attend had an average GPA of 3.0 or higher.[5] In addition, although nearly 97 percent of all D.C. public high school students are considered members of a racial minority, only 24 of the postsecondary institutions that the 290 applicants were interested in attending, excluding HBCUs, reported that minority outreach programs

[4]We examined the records of D.C. public school students because their data were more accessible than those of students who attended private high schools.

[5]Data on high school GPA were not available for 107 of the 290 D.C. public school students who were eligible for, but did not use, the tuition assistance grant in academic year 2000-01.

existed at their institutions.[6] About 21 percent of the institutions in which these applicants expressed interest have restrictions on the number of out-of-state students that the college will accept, although the extent to which this played a role in limiting these applicants' access to these institutions is unclear. According to parents who responded to our survey of parents of the 516 eligible applicants who did not use the funding, some applicants decided to postpone college or to attend an ineligible institution in academic year 2000-01, and approximately 51 applied to, but were not accepted at, any institutions participating in the TAG Program.

Enrollment at UDC changed little during the initial year of the TAG Program, and freshmen entering UDC had on average different characteristics than the average entering freshman who received a tuition assistance grant in academic year 2000-01. Since 1998, fall enrollment at UDC has remained stable. Furthermore, fewer than 20 students left UDC to participate in the TAG Program in its first year. The TAG Program and UDC appeared to serve different freshmen populations, and this may account for the minimal impact the TAG Program had on enrollment at UDC. For example, at UDC, the average age of entering freshmen was 29 years and most were enrolled part-time; in contrast, in the TAG Program, the average age of entering freshmen was almost 20 years and most were enrolled full-time.

Although issues that were initially raised by institutions concerning the administration of the TAG Program were largely resolved with the revision of program regulations in December 2000, other administrative issues exist that may hinder program operations. Our review identified problematic procedural issues related to determination of applicant eligibility and distribution of information on institutions participating in the program. For example, close to half of those who were deemed ineligible for the grant may not have had their applications fully reviewed with regard to eligibility. These applicants received ineligibility letters from the TAG Program office because they listed on their application only ineligible institutions as those they might attend rather than because they did not meet the applicant eligibility criteria. In addition, the TAG Program office is disseminating a pamphlet to potential applicants that may be misleading

[6]Of the 62 institutions that these students were interested in attending, 19 are considered HBCUs. Data on the existence of minority outreach programs at the remaining 43 institutions were incomplete. Twenty-four institutions reported at least one minority outreach program, 10 reported that no program existed, and data were not available for 9 institutions.

because it states that 2,000 postsecondary institutions across the United States are participating in the TAG Program, even though just 514 of those institutions have formally agreed to participate. We are recommending that the mayor of the District of Columbia instruct the TAG Program office to clearly establish an applicant's eligibility on the basis of his or her characteristics and indicate to applicants which schools have agreed to participate in the program. In commenting on this report, the mayor generally agreed with the findings of the report and concurred with our recommendation that the TAG Program office fully review the eligibility of all applicants. The mayor disagreed with our recommendation that the pamphlet promoting the grant program clearly identify which schools have agreed to participate in the TAG Program, commenting that this action would decrease program accessibility. We believe the recommendation would not discourage D.C. residents from applying for the grant and may avoid confusion.

Background

In 1999, the Congress enacted the D.C. College Access Act for the purpose of expanding higher education opportunities for college-bound D.C. residents in an effort to stabilize D.C.'s population and tax base. The act created the D.C. TAG Program, a residency-based tuition subsidy program which allows D.C. residents to attend participating public universities and colleges nationwide at in-state tuition rates. UDC is not eligible to participate in the TAG Program because in-state tuition rates are already available for D.C. residents.[7] The TAG Program also provides smaller grants for students to attend private institutions in the D.C. metropolitan area and private HBCUs in Maryland and Virginia. An eligible institution may participate in the grant program only if the institution has formally signed a Program Participation Agreement with the mayor of the District of Columbia. Students attending a participating public institution can receive a tuition subsidy of up to $10,000 per year (calculated as the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition rates), with a total cap of $50,000 per student. D.C. residents attending private institutions in the D.C. metropolitan area and private HBCUs in Maryland and Virginia may receive an annual grant award of up to $2,500 per year, with a total cap of $12,500 per student. The grant funding can be applied only to a student's tuition and fee costs and must not supplant other grant funding that the student is eligible to receive. As a result, the tuition assistance grant must

[7]UDC residential tuition rates for a full-time student with 12 credit hours was $900 per semester in academic year 2000-01.

be considered as the final or "last dollar" that is added to a student's financial aid package. Since the grant can be applied only to tuition and fees, other costs associated with college attendance, such as room and board fees and transportation costs, must be paid by other means.

The D.C. government received $17 million in each of fiscal years 2000 and 2001 to implement the grant program and to provide grants to qualified applicants. As of August 2001, the TAG Program disbursed approximately $11 million for grants and administration. Consequently, the D.C. government maintains a grant balance of approximately $23 million. The act (P.L. 106-98) states that the funding shall remain available until expended.

The TAG Program office engaged in a variety of publicity and outreach efforts to both D.C. residents and eligible institutions to promote the TAG Program in its first year of operation. Efforts to inform potential applicants about the TAG Program included staff visits to public and private high schools in D.C., information about the program mailed to every D.C. public high school senior, radio advertisements, and marketing posters at subway and bus stations around the city. TAG Program staff also worked with staff at the D.C. College Access Program (D.C. CAP) to provide information to D.C. public schools about the grant. The D.C. CAP is a nonprofit organization, funded by a consortium of 17 private sector companies and foundations, whose intent is to complement the TAG Program by encouraging D.C. public high school students to enter and graduate from college. D.C. CAP provides D.C. public school students with support services both before and during college, including placing college advisors in each public high school beginning in academic year 2000-01, assisting students with college and financial aid applications, and providing both information resources at D.C. public high schools and educational planning workshops for students and parents. TAG Program staff provided training and information about the grant to D.C. CAP college advisors. In order to inform eligible institutions about the grant program, staff mailed information to the president and financial aid officer of each public institution and eligible private institution. In addition, the Secretary of Education sent a letter to each chief executive officer of public higher education undergraduate institutions nationwide in July 2000, providing information about the grant program and urging institutions to sign a Program Participation Agreement with the mayor of the District of Columbia. Currently, if a grant-eligible applicant decides to attend an eligible but nonparticipating institution, the TAG Program staff contact the institution and provide information on the program as well as on the participation agreement. However, according to the TAG Program

director, the applicant and his or her family often play a vital role in persuading the institution to sign an agreement with the program.

In order to be eligible for the grant, an applicant must meet certain criteria, including graduation from any high school or attainment of a secondary school equivalency diploma after January 1998 and enrollment or acceptance for enrollment in an undergraduate program at an eligible institution. Applicants must also be domiciled[8] in D.C. for 12 consecutive months prior to the start of their freshman year of college and must continue to maintain their primary residence in D.C. throughout the grant period. In academic year 2000-01, approximately 3,500 individuals applied for the grant and 70 percent, or approximately 2,500 individuals, met the eligibility criteria. Twenty-two percent of the applicants, on the other hand, were found ineligible for the grant, and about 8 percent of the applications were pending or inactive at the time of our review. The reasons for which applicants were found ineligible include not meeting the statutory requirements pertaining to graduation and domicile.

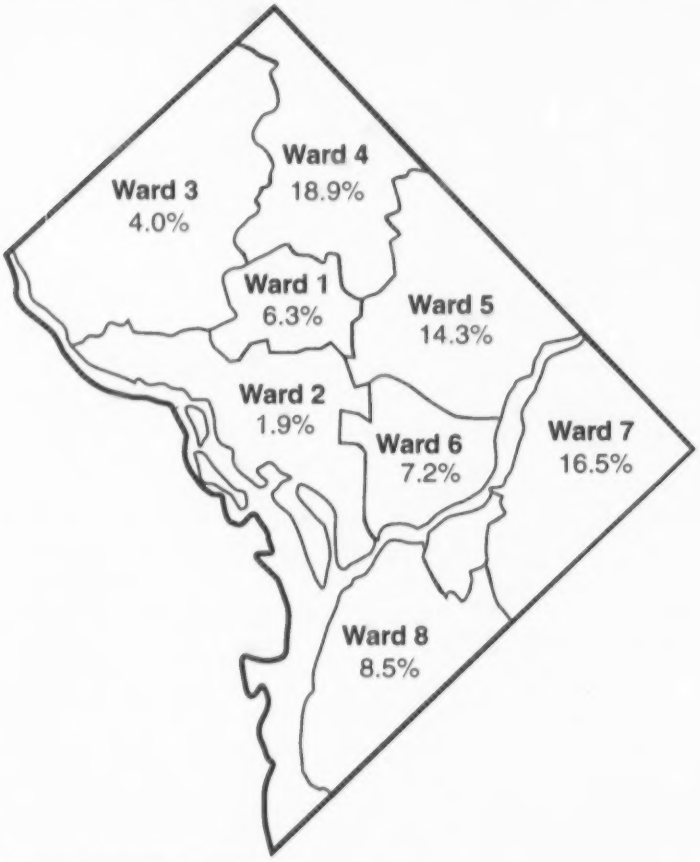
All of the wards in D.C. were represented in the applicant pool. Although D.C. comprises 8 wards, most of the applicants resided in wards 4, 5, and 7, which are located primarily in the northeast and southeast quadrants of D.C. The greatest percentage of college-age residents applying for the grant came from these three wards.[9] Figure 1 shows the percentage of college-age residents in each D.C. ward that applied for the grant.[10]

[8]To prove domicile in D.C., an applicant must submit acceptable documentation to prove that D.C. has been his or her primary place of residence for the 12 months prior to the start of the freshman year of college. Documentation includes tax records and utility bills.

[9]College-age residents are defined as the number of 18- to 24- year old residents who live in each ward. For this analysis, the number of students who applied for the grant program in each ward was divided by the number of 18- to 24- year old residents in each ward—based on census data prepared by the Office of Planning, D.C. State Data Center—to determine the percentage of college-age residents that applied for the grant in each ward.

[10]The boundaries for the D.C. wards have changed since the end of our review due to ward redistricting, which became effective on January 1, 2002.

Figure 1: Percentage of College-age D.C. Residents That Applied for the Tuition Assistance Grant by Ward



Source: GAO analysis of TAG data.

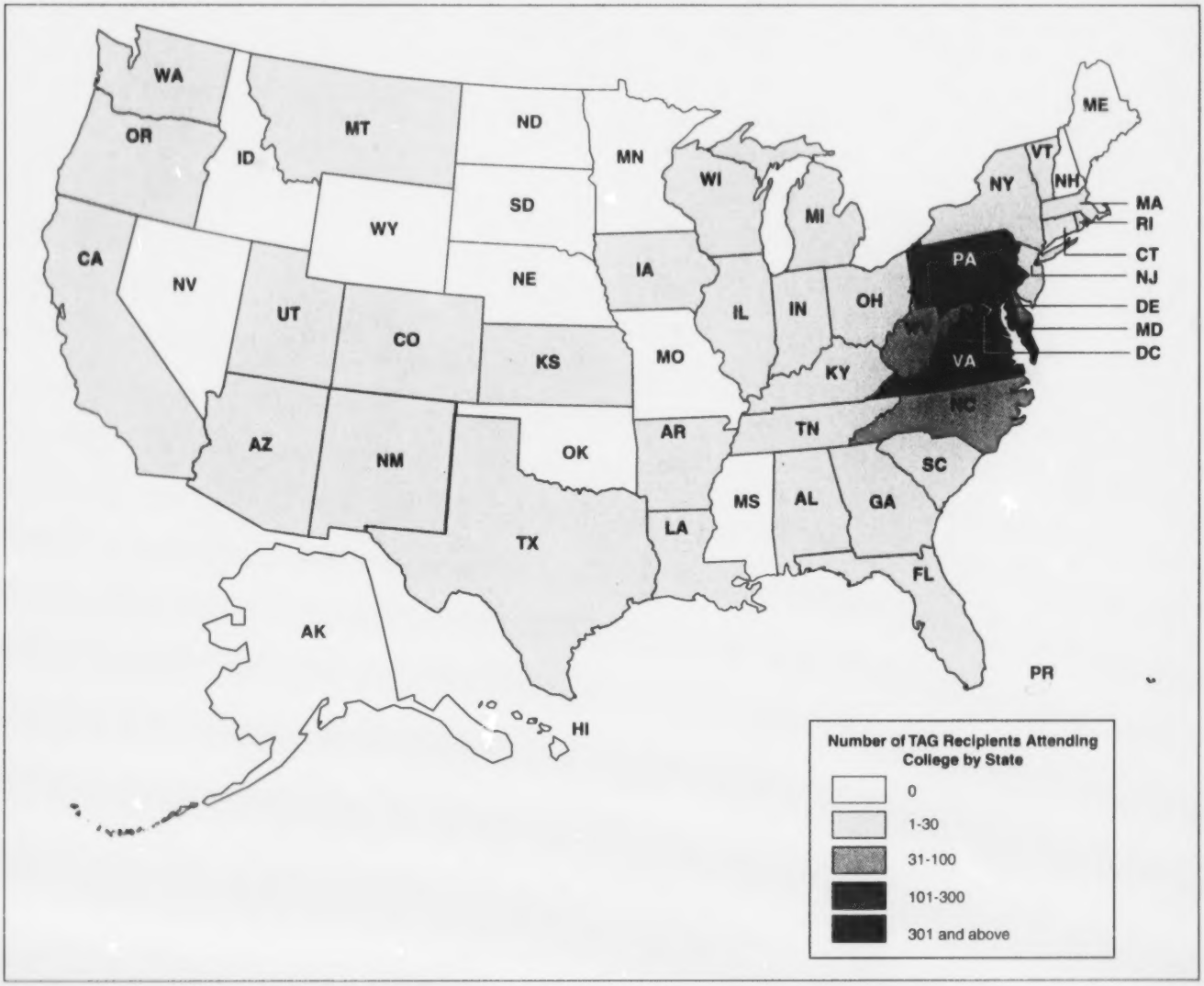
About 1,900 eligible applicants used the grant to attend 152 participating public and private institutions in academic year 2000-01. Almost half of the applicants came directly from high school, with nearly 70 percent of the applicants who recently graduated from high school coming from a D.C. public high school. The remaining applicants were already enrolled in college. Approximately 97 percent of the grant recipients for whom data was available enrolled in college full-time.[11] Eighty-six percent of TAG

[11]These percentages do not reflect missing data on enrollment status for grant recipients. Data on enrollment status were not available for 456 of the 1,920 TAG recipients.

recipients attended a 4-year institution, and 14 percent attended a 2-year college. Seventy-six percent of the eligible applicants who used the grant attended a public institution, with an average grant per fall and spring semester of nearly $2,900, whereas the remaining 24 percent attended a private institution with an average grant per fall and spring semester of approximately $1,200. Overall, 18 percent of the applicants attended an open-admission institution,[12] and almost 40 percent enrolled at a public or private HBCU. Figure 2 provides more detailed information on the number of TAG recipients who attended college in each state in academic year 2000-01.

[12]An open-admission institution maintains an admissions policy that allows the school to admit any student that applies to the school.

Figure 2: Number of TAG Recipients Attending College in Each State During Academic Year 2000-01



Source: GAO analysis of TAG data.

Initially, the act included only public institutions and private HBCUs in Maryland and Virginia, as well as private institutions in the D.C.

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metropolitan area, as eligible to participate in the TAG Program.[13] In May 2000, the program was expanded to include all public colleges and universities nationwide. Not all of these colleges and universities participate in the program, however, though they are eligible to do so. Currently, 514 public and private institutions have formally agreed to participate. Participating institutions are located in every state, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Sixty-two participating institutions are located in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Appendix II provides a list of the institutions that had signed a participation agreement with the D.C. government as of December 10, 2001.

Before the program's nationwide expansion, the TAG Program office promulgated the initial regulations for administration of the program. In the fall of 2000, four large public institutions—the University of California, the University of Florida, the University of Michigan, and the State University of New York—refused to sign the Program Participation Agreement, claiming that the regulations were overly burdensome. Subsequently, in December 2000, the TAG Program office revised the regulations, and all four institutions signed the agreement.

Current proposed legislation, H.R. 1499, would make changes to the TAG Program, including modifying some of the student eligibility requirements. The bill would expand eligibility for the grant to include D.C. residents who both begin their college education more than 3 years after they graduated from high school and who graduated from high school prior to January 1, 1998, provided that they are currently enrolled in an eligible institution. Eligible applicants would be required to meet the citizenship and immigration requirements currently specified in the Higher Education Act of 1965.[14] The bill would expand the list of eligible institutions to include private HBCUs nationwide. In addition, the bill would require the D.C. Government to establish a dedicated account for TAG Program funding and would clarify the use of administrative funding by the program office. The bill passed the House of Representatives in July 2001,

[13]The act provided that the mayor of the District of Columbia could expand the geographic scope of the public school program beyond Maryland and Virginia after consultation with Congress and the Secretary of Education if the mayor determined that eligible students experienced difficulty gaining admissions to public institutions in Maryland and Virginia because of in-state preferences and upon consideration of the cost of such an expansion.

[14]This requirement would prohibit the participation of foreign nationals in the TAG Program. Under current law, foreign nationals who meet the eligibility requirements, including proof of domicile in D.C., are eligible to receive the grant.

and was amended by and passed the Senate in December 2001; the amended bill is currently pending before the House.

The Department of Education's Inspector General (IG) completed an audit of the TAG Program finances in August 2001. The IG's audit provided findings in the areas of administrative funding and interest income and made recommendations to address each of these issues.[15]

Some Applicants May Have Experienced Barriers to College Access

Of the nearly 2,500 applicants who were eligible for the tuition assistance grant, 21 percent—or 516 applicants—did not use the grant in academic year 2000-01 and some of these applicants may have faced barriers due to college entrance requirements and the absence of minority outreach programs. Whether college enrollment caps had any impact on college access for these applicants is unclear. According to the parents who responded to our parent survey, eligible applicants did not use the grant for a variety of reasons, including decisions to postpone college attendance or enroll in an ineligible school and rejection for admission at schools participating in the TAG Program.

College entrance requirements may have been a barrier to college access for some eligible applicants who did not use the grant in academic year 2000-01. Entrance requirements vary at postsecondary institutions—from only requiring a high school diploma or equivalent to reviewing a combination of high school GPA, SAT or other college entrance examination scores, and essays. Since data on college entrance requirements were not readily available,[16] we used average freshmen high school GPA and SAT scores as a proxy for college entrance requirements. We requested GPA and SAT scores for 290 of the 516 eligible applicants who did not use the grant—those who had recently graduated from a D.C. public high school—from D.C. public school officials and compared these

[15]The IG's findings and recommendations can be found in the report titled, *Audit of the Implementation of the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999*, Final Audit Report, Control Number ED-OIG/A03-B0003, US Department of Education, Office of Inspector General, August 2001.

[16]We attempted to obtain information on SAT and high school GPA requirements for the 62 institutions by contacting college officials and reviewing requirements listed in college guide books. Many officials we contacted, however, indicated that they could not provide this information to us or that SAT and GPA data were only part of the overall admissions decision and, therefore, specific requirements were not available. However, data on average freshmen SAT scores were available for 37 institutions and high school GPAs were available for 50 institutions.

data to high school GPA and SAT scores for entering freshmen at the 62 institutions that the applicants were interested in attending. Although the average high school GPA for entering freshmen at a majority of the 62 institutions was 3.0 or higher, the average GPA for 183 of the applicants for whom data were available was 2.36.[17] Furthermore, whereas the median combined SAT score for 150 of the applicants for whom data were available was 735, entering freshmen at a majority of these institutions had median combined SAT scores higher than 735.[18] For example, these institutions reported median combined SAT scores between 800 and 1400.

The absence of minority outreach programs at these institutions may have also been a barrier to college access for some of the D.C. public school students who were eligible for, but did not use, the grant. Approximately 97 percent of D.C. public school students are considered members of a racial minority,[19] but outreach programs specifically geared toward minority students existed at only 24 of the institutions, excluding those that are considered an HBCU, that these applicants expressed interest in attending, and for which data were available.[20] For example, the University of Arizona's minority outreach efforts include favorable consideration of minority status in financial aid decisions. At Catholic University of America, outreach efforts include allowing a limited number of talented minority high school seniors to take college courses free of charge. Our survey of all participating institutions, beyond the institutions that D.C. public school students were interested in attending, showed that other minority outreach efforts include recruiting visits to high schools with large minority student populations and waiving of out-of-state enrollment cap restrictions for minority applicants.

[17]High school GPA data were not available for 107 of the 290 applicants who were eligible for, but did not use, the tuition assistance grant. Twelve of the 62 institutions did not provide data on average high school GPA for entering freshmen.

[18]SAT data were not available for 140 of the 290 applicants who were eligible for, but did not use, the tuition assistance grant in academic year 2000-01. The median SAT was calculated on the basis of median SAT scores for freshmen at 37 of the 62 institutions. Eleven of the 62 institutions did not collect SAT information on students, and we were unable to reach officials at 14 institutions to obtain these data.

[19]Since the TAG Program did not collect data on race, we used as a proxy the percentage of all D.C. public high school students who were members of a racial minority.

[20]To calculate how many of the 62 institutions had a minority outreach program, we tabulated data from our survey of colleges and universities and excluded 19 institutions that are considered HBCUs. Data on institutions with a minority outreach program were available for 34 of the 43 institutions that are not HBCUs.

Whether caps on the number of out-of-state residents who can enroll at an institution served as a barrier to college access for these eligible TAG applicants is unclear. Some public postsecondary institutions have policies that limit the percentage of undergraduates who may enroll from outside the state or who may be admitted as freshmen to the institution. For example, the University of Virginia allows 35 percent of undergraduate students to enroll from outside Virginia, while the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill caps out-of-state enrollment for undergraduates at 18 percent. Such policies exist at about 21 percent of the 62 institutions for which data were available.[21]

The parents of some eligible applicants provided a variety of reasons why the applicants did not use the TAG funding during academic year 2000-01. Of the 213 parents[22] who provided information on eligible applicants, 31 percent indicated that their son or daughter applied to but did not enroll in a college or university, 15 percent indicated that their child decided not to apply to college, and 54 percent indicated that their son or daughter attended a college or university in academic year 2000-01. Most of the grant-eligible applicants who did not use the grant attended institutions that were not eligible to participate in the TAG Program,[23] and their parents indicated that the institution chosen best met their child's educational or financial needs. Examples of ineligible colleges these applicants attended included UDC and private HBCUs outside D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. Most parents of grant-eligible applicants who applied to but did not enroll in a college indicated that their child either wanted to postpone college or did not enroll due to personal reasons. For example, one parent told us that her daughter delayed college because of the birth of a child, while another parent told us that her son wanted to wait to improve his SAT scores. Fifty-one students were not accepted to an eligible TAG college or university, and of these students, 10 of those were not accepted by any college or university. Due to a low response rate

[21]Data on enrollment caps were not available for 19 of the 62 institutions.

[22]The parent survey was sent to the parents of 516 eligible applicants who did not use the grant. We received 219 responses to our parent survey; however, 6 of the responding parents did not provide information on the applicants' activities during academic year 2000-01.

[23]Among the 80 parents who indicated that their son or daughter attended an ineligible college in academic year 2000-01, 30 reported that their child attended UDC and 50 attended other ineligible institutions.

of 42 percent, however, our results cannot be considered generalizable to all of the parents in our survey.

Minimal Change Occurred in UDC Enrollment and Characteristics Differ Between TAG and UDC Freshmen

The change in enrollment at UDC during the first year of the TAG Program was minimal, and UDC appears to be serving a different freshman population than the population served by the TAG Program. Fall semester enrollment has remained stable since 1998, and in academic year 2000-01, 18 students left UDC and used the grant funding to attend a TAG-participating college or university. The UDC officials we spoke with believed that the TAG Program would likely have little impact on UDC's enrollment level, in part because of the diverse student population that UDC serves.

UDC Enrollment Changed Little During the First Year of the TAG Program, and Only a Few Students Left to Use the Tuition Assistance Grant

UDC enrollment has changed little since the TAG Program began offering grants to D.C. residents. Between the 1999-00 and 2000-01 academic years, total undergraduate enrollment at UDC increased by about 1 percent. As shown in figure 3, UDC enrollment for fall 2000, the first semester that tuition assistance grants were awarded, was 5,008, close to the enrollment for the previous two fall semesters. In addition, entering freshmen enrollment has remained fairly stable over the past 3 years. Freshmen enrollment increased 0.4 percent—from 1,859 to 1,867—between the 1999-00 and 2000-01 academic years. UDC officials we interviewed believed that because the TAG Program was in only its first year, it had not affected enrollment at UDC. They expressed concern, however, that students cannot use the grant to attend UDC and noted that a grant could prove beneficial, because many UDC students rely on financial aid to pay for tuition costs, even though tuition rates are low.

Figure 3: Total Undergraduate Enrollment at UDC During Fall Terms 1998-2000

Source: GAO analysis of UDC enrollment data.

In the first year of the TAG Program, fewer than 20 students left UDC to use the tuition assistance grant. Overall, 136 TAG applicants were enrolled at UDC when they applied for the grant. Of that number, only 18 students determined to be eligible for the grant used the funding to attend a school other than UDC in academic year 2000-01.

UDC and TAG Appear to Be Serving Different Freshmen Populations

During academic year 2000-01, the average freshman entering UDC differed markedly from the average TAG recipient entering college as a freshman. For example, the average age of freshmen entering UDC was 29 years,[24] compared with an average age of almost 20 years for TAG recipients entering college as freshmen. In addition, whereas most UDC freshmen were enrolled as part-time students, almost all freshmen that received the tuition assistance grant were enrolled as full-time students. Finally, a higher percentage of TAG freshmen recipients graduated from a high school in D.C., Maryland, or Virginia, compared with UDC freshmen. These differences in the two populations suggest that UDC and the TAG

[24]While the average age of UDC entering freshmen was 29 years, UDC officials reported that entering freshmen ranged in age from 17 years to 55 years.

Program draw on different student populations. In fact, the UDC officials we spoke with felt that the impact of the TAG Program would not be large because of the differing groups of college students that UDC and the TAG Program serve. Table 1 shows the profiles of UDC and TAG college freshmen for academic year 2000-01.

Table 1: Profiles of UDC and TAG Freshmen in Academic Year 2000-01

Student characteristics	UDC	TAG
Average age	29 years	20 years
Percentage full-time	30	96
Percentage part-time	70	4
Percentage that attended high school in D.C., Md., or Va.	73[a]	97[b]

Source: GAO analysis of UDC enrollment and TAG applicant data.
[a]For UDC, data on high school attended is based on students enrolled after the drop period, whereas the average age and full-time/part-time data are based on students who were officially registered for classes for each semester.

[b]For TAG recipients, the high school data excludes those students for whom location of high school attendance was not available.

Although Most Initial Concerns Have Been Resolved, Some Administrative Issues May Hinder Program Operations

Although most concerns about administration of the TAG Program that were initially raised by four large institutions[25] were largely resolved by the revision of the regulations in December 2000, some administrative issues exist that may hinder program operations. Our review of the TAG Program identified issues with the procedure that TAG staff use to determine eligibility for the grant when applicants list on their grant applications only ineligible institutions as schools they are interested in attending. We also found that unclear and potentially misleading information about participating institutions is being disseminated by the TAG Program office in both an informational pamphlet to TAG applicants and in letters sent to eligible applicants.

Initial Concerns Raised by Some Institutions Were Generally Resolved, and Participating Institutions Report Few Problems

Some concerns about the initial TAG Program voiced by four participating institutions have been resolved. Some officials at these four institutions initially expressed apprehension regarding the institutional requirements contained in the original program regulations. For example, the officials whom we spoke with at the four institutions felt that program requirements—including the requirements that institutions conduct an

[25]As noted earlier, the four institutions included the University of California, the University of Florida, the University of Michigan, and the State University of New York.

annual compliance audit, maintain records that duplicate those held by the TAG Program office, and confirm student eligibility—would be burdensome for their institutions. University officials whom we spoke with at these institutions indicated that most of their initial concerns were resolved when program regulations were revised in December 2000. In fact, all four institutions have now signed a Program Participation Agreement with the mayor of the District of Columbia, formally agreeing to participate in the grant program.

In general, the few remaining administrative concerns mentioned by the university officials we spoke with did not appear to be problematic at the majority of the institutions that enrolled tuition assistance grant recipients in academic year 2000-01. For example, although officials from two of the four universities stated that administering the grant required the time-consuming task of creating a separate financial aid process, officials from 74 percent of the participating institutions that we surveyed indicated that they did not have to create a new process for TAG students. Furthermore, officials from more than half of the participating institutions reported that the administration of the grant did not require additional university staff time. Among those who said that it took longer to administer the grants than to determine financial aid for students not receiving the grants, the majority indicated that the administration process took less than 10 minutes longer.

Some of the university officials that we interviewed indicated that the program regulation requiring that their institutions wait to bill the TAG Program office until the end of the drop/add period—sometimes as long as 30 days after the start of classes—resulted in late payment for schools. According to the officials, waiting for grant payments contravenes the practice at many institutions—some of which are bound by state law—to collect tuition and fees before the first day of class. At the University of California, for example, officials told us that this regulation required that the institution provide a loan to the student to cover tuition costs for the period between the first day of classes and the university's receipt of the grant funding from the TAG Program office. However, whereas approximately 57 percent of the participating institutions have such a statutory or institutional requirement, nearly 70 percent of the institutions we surveyed stated that similar delays in tuition payments affect students in other grant programs. TAG Program officials said that they will review the possibility of changing the drop/add requirement for academic year 2002-03. In addition, while three of the schools we interviewed initially felt that the record-keeping requirements for the TAG Program were more burdensome than was necessary for a relatively small program, more than

two-thirds of the participating institutions indicated that the record keeping was not significantly different from that for other financial aid programs they administer.

Administrative Issues Exist That May Hinder Program Operations

In the first year of the grant program, some applicants who were found ineligible for the grant did not receive a full and consistent review of their eligibility factors by TAG staff. Nearly half of all applicants who were deemed ineligible were so assessed because they listed on their grant applications only ineligible institutions as schools they were likely to attend. TAG staff told us that because of the volume of grant applications received in the first year, the staff did not verify all eligibility factors for applicants listing only ineligible institutions on their applications. TAG staff stated that these applicants were sent a letter of ineligibility solely on the basis of the applicants' listing of ineligible schools on their applications. According to TAG staff, they informed the applicants by telephone that because the institutions they listed were ineligible for the grant program, the applicants would receive a letter of ineligibility for the grant. From the applicants who were deemed ineligible because they listed ineligible institutions, we randomly selected 75 files to review in depth. Our review indicated that the TAG staff might not have checked the domicile criterion for 55 percent of applicants or the graduation criterion for 11 percent of applicants. Furthermore, our review showed that for nearly 40 percent of applicants, no record existed of their being contacted by telephone. For the current year of the grant program—academic year 2001-02—TAG staff members have indicated that they will discontinue their attempts to contact by telephone those applicants who list only ineligible institutions. Instead, these applicants will automatically receive ineligibility letters.

In addition, the TAG Program office is disseminating unclear and misleading information to potential applicants regarding which postsecondary institutions have agreed to participate in the grant program. The TAG Program office provides potential applicants with a pamphlet that is meant to inform the applicant as to which colleges and universities he or she can attend with the grant. However, this pamphlet lists approximately 2,000 postsecondary institutions as "participating," even though just 514 of these institutions have formally agreed to participate in the grant program by signing a Program Participation Agreement with the mayor of the District of Columbia. According to the TAG Program director, this pamphlet lists all of the institutions that are eligible to participate in the TAG Program—rather than just those that have agreed to participate—to provide applicants with information on the full range of

institutions they could theoretically attend with the grant. The director felt that listing only the participating institutions might discourage individuals from applying for the grant.

Misleading information is also provided to grant-eligible TAG applicants in the award letter. This letter is to be either sent or taken as proof of grant eligibility to the college or university the eligible applicant decides to attend. However, the letter states that the TAG Program office will pay tuition "at any U.S. public college or university that you attend," without informing the applicant that not all of these institutions have agreed to participate in the TAG Program. Therefore, an applicant choosing to attend an institution that is eligible but not currently participating may experience difficulty or delay with receiving the grant because of the time it could take to convince the institution to participate in the program—possibly occurring after the applicant has enrolled at the institution. In addition, eligible applicants who, for example, list one eligible institution and one ineligible institution on their grant application receive a standard letter of eligibility, which does not inform the applicant that one of the institutions may not be eligible for the grant. Therefore, this applicant may not be aware that he or she will not receive the grant if he or she chooses to attend the ineligible institution listed on his or her grant application. The TAG Program director believes that the letter sent to applicants is clear in that it states that the grant can only be used at eligible institutions. TAG Program officials said that they are currently reviewing TAG Program operations and procedures.

Conclusions

Since the establishment of the TAG Program, D.C. residents have more resources available to attend college if they choose an eligible institution that agrees to participate in the grant program. However, although the TAG Program's purpose is to expand higher education opportunities for D.C. residents, a few of the program's procedures may inadvertently discourage and hinder some D.C. residents from receiving grant money. The practice of determining that applicants are ineligible when they list only ineligible institutions on their grant applications could deny applicants who meet the student eligibility requirements the resources that they need for college solely because of the institutions they expressed an interest in attending. This practice is also troublesome given that at the time applicants submit their grant applications to the TAG office, they are not required to have enrolled at or even submitted a college application to the postsecondary institutions they list on their applications. In addition, the award letter and pamphlet that do not clearly notify applicants that an institution in which they are interested is ineligible or not participating in

the TAG Program, may confuse applicants who then choose to attend ineligible or nonparticipating institutions. These factors could lead to frustration among applicants and may cause some D.C. residents to discontinue their efforts to obtain grant assistance to attend a postsecondary institution.

Recommendations

We recommend that the mayor of the District of Columbia direct the TAG Program office to

- Change the current applicant eligibility determination process to ensure that (1) all applicants receive a full review to determine their eligibility to receive the grant, (2) eligible applicants who indicate interest only in ineligible institutions are made aware in their award letters that the institutions listed on their applications are ineligible and that an eligible school must be selected for the applicants to receive the tuition assistance grant, and (3) all letters sent to eligible applicants indicate which institutions have already formally agreed to participate in the grant program.
- Indicate clearly in the pamphlet promoting the TAG Program which eligible postsecondary institutions have already formally agreed to participate in the grant program.

Agency Comments

We obtained comments on a draft of this report from the U.S. Department of Education, the mayor of the District of Columbia, and UDC. The comments from the mayor and UDC are reproduced in appendixes III and IV, respectively. Education only provided technical clarifications, which we incorporated when appropriate. UDC also provided technical clarifications that we incorporated when appropriate.

The mayor of the District of Columbia generally agreed with the findings of our report and concurred with our recommendation that the TAG Program office conduct a full review of all applicants to determine their eligibility to receive the grant. However, as to our recommendation that the TAG Program office clearly indicate to applicants which eligible postsecondary institutions have signed a Program Participation Agreement, the mayor disagreed, stating that advertising only those institutions that have formally agreed to participate would decrease the accessibility of the program. The mayor stated that students would become discouraged if they saw that the institutions they were interested in attending were not listed in TAG Program literature. Our recommendation, however, does not preclude the TAG Program office

from providing applicants a list of all institutions that are potentially eligible to participate in the program, but rather recommends that the TAG Program office separately identify those institutions that have formally agreed to participate. By providing this additional information, we believe that potential applicants will be better informed about the status of the postsecondary institutions they are interested in attending. We do not believe that this additional information would discourage D.C. residents from applying for the grant program and may avoid confusion for those eligible applicants who choose to apply to currently nonparticipating institutions. Finally, the mayor disagreed with the title of the report, commenting that the title is not borne out by the contents of the report. We changed the title to address his concerns.

Many of the comments made by UDC were related to the potential impact of the TAG Program on UDC and the funding levels of the TAG Program. UDC stated that although enrollment levels have not significantly changed as a result of the implementation of the TAG Program, UDC officials believe the TAG Program may have impacted the quality of the entering freshmen at UDC and that the institution is losing some of the better-prepared college-bound students in D.C. to institutions that are participating in the TAG Program. While we recognize the importance of analyzing student quality, such an analysis was outside the scope of the mandate and the request. UDC further believes that the reporting of the average age and enrollment status of UDC freshmen does not tell the complete story of the type of student that is served by the institution. They stated that UDC students range in age from 17 years to 55 years and that most students must work full-time to meet personal and family responsibilities. We focused our comparison of UDC and TAG Program freshmen on average student age, enrollment status, and location of high school the student graduated from because these were among the only data available from both UDC and the TAG Program that allowed a direct comparison of the types of students that each were serving. UDC officials also provided updated data on the location of high schools attended by UDC entering freshmen, which we incorporated. Regarding the funding of the TAG Program, UDC believed that an examination of the funding levels for the TAG Program were needed and suggested that any unused funding for the TAG Program could be reallocated to UDC to enhance education programs and scholarships for UDC students. In addition, UDC commented that further examination of various aspects of the TAG Program were necessary, including an analysis of graduation outcomes for TAG Program participants, the impact of the TAG Program on the quality of UDC students and UDC's program and services, as well as the financial impact of the TAG Program on D.C. residents. While we recognize that

these issues are important, they were not within the scope of the mandate or the request.

We are sending copies of this report to the House Committee on Government Reform, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, and other interested committees; the Secretary of Education; and other interested parties. Copies will also be made available to others upon request. Please contact me at (202) 512-8403 or Diana Pietrowiak, Assistant Director, at (202) 512-6239 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Other GAO contacts and staff acknowledgments are listed in appendix V.

Cornelia M. Ashby

Cornelia M. Ashby
Director, Education, Workforce,
and Income Security Issues

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

A variety of data sources allowed us to examine different aspects of the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) Program. We wanted to explore several issues, such as the extent to which TAG-eligible applicants who did not use the tuition assistance grant faced barriers to college access, how student enrollment at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) has changed since the TAG Program began, whether UDC and TAG serve similar freshmen populations, and whether there are program administration issues that could potentially hinder the TAG Program operations. We selected data sources that would allow us to examine these issues.

To review and summarize general information on TAG applicants, we obtained a database from the TAG Program office listing applicant data, such as name of high school attended, year of college enrollment, and date of birth. These data, which we did not verify, represent the only information available on TAG applicants. To determine whether eligible applicants who did not use the tuition assistance grant may have faced barriers to college access, we obtained data from the TAG Program office on applicants who applied and were found eligible for the grant, but did not use the grant in academic year 2000-01. We then analyzed the academic qualifications of some of these eligible applicants and compared these data with similar data on average freshmen at the postsecondary institutions they listed on their TAG applications as colleges they would most likely attend. To do this, we requested the grade point average (GPA) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores for 290 of the eligible applicants—those who had recently graduated from a D.C. public high school—from D.C. public school officials and obtained data for some of these graduates. We compared the available data on the D.C. public school students to GPA and SAT data we obtained for average freshmen at the 62 institutions these applicants were interested in attending from *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, 2001*; *Peterson's 4 Year Colleges, 2001*; and *Peterson's 2 Year Colleges, 2001*. To determine whether access barriers may have existed at the 62 institutions, we obtained data on the presence of minority outreach programs and the use of out-of-state enrollment caps from a college survey that we developed as part of our review.

To further identify barriers to college access, we sought to determine why the eligible applicants did not use the grant. To do this, we developed and administered a survey for the parents of all 516 eligible applicants who did not participate in the TAG Program. We chose to survey parents rather than the eligible applicants, because current contact information for the parents was readily available. We received responses from 42 percent of

the parents surveyed, and from these responses we obtained general information on the reasons these applicants did not use the tuition assistance grant.

To obtain information on how student enrollment at UDC changed during the initial year of the TAG Program and what types of students UDC and TAG serve, we obtained student data from UDC, including enrollment numbers, age, enrollment status, and information on high schools from which UDC students graduated. To compare the average UDC student with the average TAG recipient, we analyzed data for TAG recipients, including age, enrollment status, and high schools attended, who entered their freshmen year of college in academic year 2000-01.

To determine whether program administration issues exist that could potentially hinder program operations, we interviewed the four financial aid directors from the institutions that initially voiced concerns regarding the administration of the TAG Program—the University of California, the University of Florida, the University of Michigan, and the State University of New York. We also conducted a survey of 140 institutions that administered the grant in academic year 2000-01. We received responses from 84 percent of the institutions in our survey. In addition, to develop an understanding of the program operations and procedures, we interviewed managers and staff of the TAG Program office as well as officials in the office of the D.C. Chief Financial Officer. We also interviewed U.S. Department of Education officials to obtain their views on the TAG Program. Furthermore, we reviewed 75 randomly selected files of ineligible applicants to determine whether TAG officials had conducted a full eligibility review of applicants who had listed ineligible colleges or universities on their applications.

Appendix II: Colleges and Universities That As of December 10, 2001, Had Agreed to Participate in the TAG Program

State	Institution Name	City
Alaska	University of Alaska Southeast	Juneau
Alabama	Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University	Normal
	Alabama State University	Montgomery
	Auburn University	Auburn
	Bishop State Community College	Mobile
	Central Alabama Community College	Alexander City
	Enterprise State Junior College	Enterprise
	Gadsden State Community College	Gadsden
	Jacksonville State University	Jacksonville
	Jefferson Davis Community College	Brewton
	Southern Union State Community College	Wadley
	Troy State University Montgomery	Montgomery
	University of Alabama	Tuscaloosa
	University of Alabama at Birmingham	Birmingham
	University of Alabama at Huntsville	Huntsville
	University of North Alabama	Florence
Arkansas	Cossatot Technical College	De Queen
	Delta Technical Institute	Marked Tree
	Forest Echoes Technical Institute	Crossett
	Henderson State University	Arkadelphia
	Southern Arkansas University	Magnolia
	University of Arkansas	Fayetteville
	University of Arkansas at Little Rock	Little Rock
	University of Arkansas at Monticello	Monticello
	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Pine Bluff
	University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville	Batesville
	University of Central Arkansas	Conway
	Westark College	Fort Smith
Arizona	Arizona State University	Tempe
	Eastern Arizona College	Thatcher
	GateWay Community College	Phoenix
	Pima County Community College District	Tucson
	Pinal Community College District - Central Arizona College	Coolidge
	University of Arizona (The)	Tucson
	Yavapai College	Prescott
California	California State University Dominguez Hills	Carson
	California State University, Bakersfield	Bakersfield
	California State University, Northridge	Northridge
	California State University, San Marcos	San Marcos
	Cerro Coso Community College	Ridgecrest
	Chabot Community College	Hayward
	Chaffey Community College	Rancho Cucamonga
	Citrus College	Glendora

State	Institution Name	City
	College of the Sequoias	Visalia
	Contra Costa College	San Pablo
	De Anza Community College	Cupertino
	East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program	West Covina
	Fullerton College	Fullerton
	Lassen College	Susanville
	Long Beach City College	Long Beach
	Los Angeles Pierce College	Woodland Hills
	MiraCosta College	Oceanside
	Monterey Peninsula College	Monterey
	Porterville College	Porterville
	Riverside Community College	Riverside
	San Bernardino Valley College	San Bernardino
	San Diego State University	San Diego
	San Francisco State University	San Francisco
	Sonoma State University	Rohnert Park
	University of California - Davis	Davis
	University of California - San Diego	La Jolla
	University of California - Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz
	University of California (The) - Berkeley	Berkeley
	University of California Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara
	West Hills Community College	Coalinga
Colorado	Arapahoe Community College	Littleton
	Colorado School of Mines	Golden
	Colorado State University	Fort Collins
	Front Range Community College	Westminster
	Lamar Community College	Lamar
	Mesa State College	Grand Junction
	Metropolitan State College of Denver	Denver
	Red Rocks Community College	Lakewood
	Trinidad State Junior College	Trinidad
	University of Colorado at Boulder	Boulder
	University of Northern Colorado	Greeley
Connecticut	Charter Oak State College	New Britain
	Middlesex Community College	Middletown
	University of Connecticut	Storrs
	Western Connecticut State University	Danbury
District of Columbia	American University	Washington
	Catholic University of America	Washington
	Corcoran College of Art and Design	Washington
	Gallaudet University	Washington
	George Washington University	Washington
	Georgetown University	Washington
	Howard University	Washington

State	Institution Name	City
	Southeastern University	Washington
	Trinity College	Washington
Delaware	Delaware State University	Dover
	University of Delaware	Newark
Florida	Brevard Community College	Cocoa
	Daytona Beach Community College	Daytona Beach
	Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University	Tallahassee
	Florida Atlantic University	Boca Raton
	Florida Community College at Jacksonville	Jacksonville
	Florida Gulf Coast University	Fort Myers
	Florida International University	Miami
	Florida State University	Tallahassee
	Lake City Community College	Lake City
	Palm Beach Community College	Lake Worth
	Pasco - Hernando Community College	New Port Richey
	Seminole Community College	Sanford
	South Florida Community College	Avon Park
	University of Central Florida	Orlando
	University of Florida	Gainesville
	Valencia Community College	Orlando
Georgia	Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College	Tifton
	Atlanta Technical Institute	Atlanta
	Dekalb Technical Institute	Clarkston
	Gainesville College	Gainesville
	Georgia College & State University	Milledgeville
	Georgia Institute of Technology	Atlanta
	Georgia Perimeter College	Decatur
	Georgia Southwestern State University	Americus
	Middle Georgia College	Cochran
	Savannah State University	Savannah
	South Georgia College	Douglas
	University of Georgia	Athens
	Valdosta State College	Valdosta
Hawaii	University of Hawaii at Hilo	Hilo
Iowa	Iowa State University of Science & Technology	Ames
	University of Iowa	Iowa City
	University of Northern Iowa	Cedar Falls
Idaho	College of Southern Idaho	Twin Falls
	Idaho State University	Pocatello
	Lewis-Clark State College	Lewiston
	University of Idaho	Moscow
Illinois	Kishwaukee College	Malta
	McHenry County College	Crystal Lake
	Parkland College	Champaign

State	Institution Name	City
	Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	Carbondale
	University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign	Champaign
	University of Illinois Central Office	Urbana
	Western Illinois University	Macomb
	William Rainey Harper College	Palatine
Indiana	Indiana University - Bloomington	Bloomington
	Indiana University - Purdue University - Fort Wayne	Fort Wayne
	Purdue University	West Lafayette
Kansas	Allen County Community College	Iola
	Barton County Community College	Great Bend
	Coffeyville Community College	Coffeyville
	Emporia State University	Emporia
	Fort Scott Community College	Fort Scott
	Independence Community College	Independence
	Labette Community College	Parsons
	Manhattan Area Technical College	Manhattan
	Pratt Community College & Area Vocational School	Pratt
	Southwest Kansas Technical School	Liberal
	University of Kansas	Lawrence
	Washburn University -- Topeka	Topeka
Kentucky	Hopkinsville Community College	Hopkinsville
	Jefferson Community College - University of Kentucky Community College System	Louisville
	Lexington Community College	Lexington
	Madisonville Community College	Madisonville
	Morehead State University	Morehead
	Murray State University	Murray
	Northern Kentucky University	Highland Heights
	University of Kentucky	Lexington
	University of Louisville	Louisville
Louisiana	Delgado Community College	New Orleans
	Grambling State University	Grambling
	Louisiana State University at Alexandria	Alexandria
	Louisiana State University in Shreveport	Shreveport
	Louisiana Technical College - Alexandria Campus	Alexandria
	Louisiana Technical College - Ascension Campus	Sorrento
	Northwestern State University	Natchitoches
	Southern University and Agricultural & Mechanical Colg at Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge
	University of New Orleans	New Orleans
Massachusetts	Bristol Community College	Fall River
	Massachusetts College of Art	Boston
	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	North Adams
	Mount Wachusett Community College	Gardner
	Springfield Technical Community College	Springfield
	University of Massachusetts - Amherst	Amherst

State	Institution Name	City
	University of Massachusetts - Boston	Boston
	University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth	North Dartmouth
Maryland	Allegany College of Maryland	Cumberland
	Baltimore City Community College	Baltimore
	Bowie State University	Bowie
	Capitol College	Laurel
	Cecil Community College	North East
	Chesapeake College	Wye Mills
	College of Southern Maryland	La Plata
	Columbia Union College	Takoma Park
	Coppin State College	Baltimore
	Frederick Community College	Frederick
	Frostburg State University	Frostburg
	Garrett Community College	McHenry
	Hagerstown Community College	Hagerstown
	Howard Community College	Columbia
	Maryland College of Art and Design	Silver Spring
	Montgomery College	Rockville
	Morgan State University	Baltimore
	Prince George's Community College	Largo
	Salisbury State University	Salisbury
	St. Mary's College of Maryland	Saint Mary's City
	Towson University	Towson
	University of Baltimore	Baltimore
	University of Maryland - Baltimore County	Baltimore
	University of Maryland - Eastern Shore	Princess Anne
	University of Maryland - University College	East Adelphi
	University of Maryland at College Park	College Park
Maine	Eastern Maine Technical College	Bangor
	Maine Maritime Academy	Castine
	Northern Maine Technical College	Presque Isle
	University of Maine	Orono
	University of Maine - Farmington	Farmington
	University of Maine - Fort Kent	Fort Kent
	University of Maine - Machias	Machias
	University of Maine - Presque Isle	Presque Isle
	University of Southern Maine	Portland
Michigan	Alpena Community College	Alpena
	Eastern Michigan University	Ypsilanti
	Ferris State University	Big Rapids
	JTPA School of Practical Nursing	Detroit
	Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Kalamazoo
	Michigan State University	East Lansing
	Michigan Technological University	Houghton

State	Institution Name	City
	Monroe County Community College	Monroe
	Montcalm Community College	Sidney
	Northern Michigan University	Marquette
	St. Clair County Community College	Port Huron
	University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor
	University of Michigan - Flint	Flint
	Washtenaw Community College	Ann Arbor
	Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo
Minnesota	Dakota County Technical College	Rosemount
	Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College	Cloquet
	Inver Hills Community College	Inver Grove Heights
	Metropolitan State University	Saint Paul
	Minnesota State University Moorhead	Moorhead
	St. Cloud State University	Saint Cloud
	University of Minnesota - Morris	Morris
	University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	Minneapolis
Missouri	Lincoln University	Jefferson City
	Metropolitan Community Colleges	Kansas City
	Missouri Western State College	St. Joseph
	North Central Missouri College	Trenton
	Northwest Missouri State University	Maryville
	Southwest Missouri University - West Plains	West Plains
	Truman State University	Kirksville
	University of Missouri - Columbia	Columbia
	University of Missouri - Rolla	Rolla
	University of Missouri - Saint Louis	St. Louis
Mississippi	Alcorn State University	Alcorn State
	Jackson State University	Jackson
Montana	Montana State University - Billings	Billings
	Montana Tech of the University of Montana	Butte
	University of Montana (The)	Missoula
North Carolina	Appalachian State University	Boone
	Bladen Community College	Dublin
	Brunswick Community College	Supply
	Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute	Hudson
	Cape Fear Community College	Wilmington
	Carteret Community College	Morehead City
	Catawba Valley Community College	Hickory
	Central Carolina Community College	Sanford
	Cleveland Community College	Shelby
	Craven Community College	New Bern
	East Carolina University	Greenville
	Elizabeth City State University	Elizabeth City
	Fayetteville State University	Fayetteville

State	Institution Name	City
	Forsyth Technical Community College	Winston-Salem
	Halifax Community College	Weldon
	James Sprunt Community College	Kenansville
	Martin Community College	Williamston
	North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University	Greensboro
	North Carolina Central University	Durham
	North Carolina School of the Arts	Winston-Salem
	North Carolina State University	Raleigh
	Randolph Community College	Asheboro
	Richmond Community College	Hamlet
	Stanly Community College	Albemarle
	University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill
	University of North Carolina - Charlotte	Charlotte
	University of North Carolina - Greensboro	Greensboro
	University of North Carolina - Wilmington	Wilmington
	University of North Carolina at Asheville	Asheville
	University of North Carolina at Pembroke	Pembroke
	Wake Technical Community College	Raleigh
	Western Piedmont Community College	Morganton
	Winston - Salem State University	Winston-Salem
North Dakota	Bismarck State College	Bismarck
	Dickinson State University	Dickinson
	Lake Region State College	Devils Lake
	Mayville State University	Mayville
	Minot State University	Minot
	Minot State University - Bottineau	Bottineau
	North Dakota State University - Main Campus - Fargo	Fargo
	Sitting Bull College	Ft Yates
	University of North Dakota - Main Campus - Grand Forks	Grand Forks
	Valley City State University	Valley City
	Williston State College	Williston
Nebraska	Nebraska Indian Community College	Macy
	Southeast Community College	Lincoln
	University of Nebraska	Lincoln
	University of Nebraska Central Office	Lincoln
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Technical Institute	Concord
	Plymouth State College	Plymouth
	University of New Hampshire	Durham
New Jersey	Atlantic Cape Community College	Mays Landing
	Burlington County College - Pemberton Campus	Pemberton
	Kean University	Union
	Montclair State University	Upper Montclair
	New Jersey City University	Jersey City
	Ramapo College of New Jersey	Mahwah

State	Institution Name	City
	Rutgers the State University of New Jersey	New Brunswick
	Salem Community College	Carneys Point
	Sussex County Community College	Newton
	William Paterson University of New Jersey	Wayne
New Mexico	New Mexico Highlands University	Las Vegas
	New Mexico Military Institute	Roswell
	New Mexico State University	Las Cruces
Nevada	Western Nevada Community College	Carson City
New York	Binghamton University - State University of New York	Binghamton
	Broome Community College	Binghamton
	Cayuga County Community College	Auburn
	Cornell University	Ithaca
	CUNY LaGuardia Community College	Long Island City
	Dutchess Community College	Poughkeepsie
	Fashion Institute of Technology	New York
	Mohawk Valley Community College	Utica
	Monroe Community College	Rochester
	New York State College of Ceramics	Alfred
	Purchase College of the State University of New York	Purchase
	State University of New York - Rockland Community College	Suffern
	State University of New York at Farmingdale	Farmingdale
	State University of New York College of Technology	Utica
	Sullivan County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)	Liberty
	Sullivan County Community College - SUNY Office of Community Colleges	Loch Sheldrake
	SUNY College at Cortland	Cortland
	SUNY College at Fredonia	Fredonia
	SUNY College at Potsdam	Potsdam
	SUNY College of Environment Science & Forestry	Syracuse
	SUNY College of Technology at Delhi	Delhi
	SUNY Ulster County Community College	Stone Ridge
	SUNY Westchester Community College	Valhalla
	University at Albany - State University of New York	Albany
Ohio	Belmont Technical College	St. Clairsville
	Bowling Green State University	Bowling Green
	Central State University	Wilberforce
	Cleveland State University	Cleveland
	Columbus State Community College	Columbus
	Cuyahoga Community College	Cleveland
	Delaware Joint Vocational School	Delaware
	Hocking College	Nelsonville
	Kent State University	Kent
	Marion Technical College	Marion
	Miami University	Oxford
	North Central Technical College	Mansfield

State	Institution Name	City
	Ohio State University (The)	Columbus
	Ohio University	Athens
	Terra Community College	Fremont
	University of Akron (The)	Akron
	University of Cincinnati	Cincinnati
	Wright State University	Dayton
	Youngstown State University	Youngstown
Oklahoma	Cameron University	Lawton
	Carl Albert State College	Poteau
	Langston University	Langston
	Northeastern State University	Tahlequah
	Northern Oklahoma College	Tonkawa
	Redlands Community College	El Reno
	Southern Oklahoma Technology Center	Ardmore
	University of Central Oklahoma	Edmond
	University of Oklahoma	Norman
	University of Science & Arts of Oklahoma	Chickasha
Oregon	Southern Oregon University	Ashland
	Southwestern Oregon Community College	Coos Bay
	University of Oregon	Eugene
	Western Oregon University	Monmouth
Pennsylvania	Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania	Bloomsburg
	Butler County Community College	Butler
	California University of Pennsylvania	California
	Cheyney State University	Cheyney
	Clarion University of Pennsylvania	Clarion
	Community College of Allegheny County - Allegheny Campus	Pittsburgh
	Community College of Beaver County	Monaca
	Community College of Philadelphia	Philadelphia
	Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	Edinboro
	Harrisburg Area Community College	Harrisburg
	Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	Kutztown
	Lincoln University	Lincoln University
	Mansfield University of Pennsylvania	Mansfield
	Millersville University of Pennsylvania	Millersville
	Northampton Community College	Bethlehem
	Pennsylvania College of Technology	Williamsport
	Pennsylvania State University	University Park
	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	Shippensburg
	Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania	Slippery Rock
	Temple University	Philadelphia
	University of Pittsburgh – Bradford	Bradford
	University of Pittsburgh – Greensburg	Greensburg
	University of Pittsburgh – Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh

State	Institution Name	City
	University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown	Johnstown
	University of Pittsburgh at Titusville	Titusville
	West Chester University of Pennsylvania	West Chester
Puerto Rico	University of Puerto Rico - Central Administration	San Juan
Rhode Island	University of Rhode Island	Kingston
South Carolina	Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina	Charleston
	Clemson University	Clemson
	Coastal Carolina University	Conway
	College of Charleston	Charleston
	Francis Marion University	Florence
	Greenville Technical College	Greenville
	Midlands Technical College	West Columbia
	Northeastern Technical College	Cheraw
	South Carolina State University	Orangeburg
	University of South Carolina	Columbia
	University of South Carolina – Aiken	Aiken
	University of South Carolina – Beaufort	Beaufort
	University of South Carolina – Lancaster	Lancaster
	University of South Carolina – Salkehatchie	Allendale
	University of South Carolina – Spartanburg	Spartanburg
	University of South Carolina - Sumter	Sumter
	University of South Carolina - Union	Union
	University of South Carolina Regional Campuses	Columbia
	Winthrop University	Rock Hill
South Dakota	Dakota State University	Madison
	Northern State University	Aberdeen
	University of South Dakota	Vermillion
Tennessee	Pellissippi State Technical Community College	Knoxville
	Tennessee State University	Nashville
	Tennessee Technical Center - Morristown	Morristown
	University of Memphis	Memphis
	University of Tennessee - Chattanooga	Chattanooga
	University of Tennessee - Knoxville	Knoxville
	University of Tennessee University-Wide Administration Central Office	Knoxville
Texas	Austin Community College	Austin
	Cisco Junior College	Cisco
	El Centro College	Dallas
	Houston Community College	Houston
	Panola College	Carthage
	Southwest Texas State University	San Marcos
	Stephen F Austin State University	Nacogdoches
	Sul Ross State University	Alpine
	Texas A&M University	College Station
	Texas Southern University	Houston

State	Institution Name	City
	Texas State Technical College - Harlingen	Harlingen
	Trinity Valley Community College	Athens
	University of Houston - Victoria	Victoria
	University of North Texas	Denton
	University of Texas at Austin	Austin
	West Texas Agricultural & Mechanical University	Canyon
Utah	College of Eastern Utah	Price
	Dixie State College of Utah	St. George
	Southern Utah University	Cedar City
	University of Utah	Salt Lake City
	Utah State University	Logan
	Weber State University	Ogden
Virginia	Blue Ridge Community College	Weyers Cave
	Christopher Newport University	Newport News
	College of William & Mary	Williamsburg
	George Mason University	Fairfax
	Hampton University	Hampton
	James Madison University	Harrisonburg
	John Tyler Community College	Chester
	Longwood College	Farmville
	Lord Fairfax Community College	Middletown
	Mary Washington College	Fredericksburg
	Marymount University	Arlington
	Mountain Empire Community College	Big Stone Gap
	Norfolk State University	Norfolk
	Northern Virginia Community College	Annandale
	Old Dominion University	Norfolk
	Patrick Henry Community College	Martinsville
	Piedmont Virginia Community College	Charlottesville
	Radford University	Radford
	Saint Paul's College	Lawrenceville
	Tidewater Community College	Portsmouth
	University of Virginia	Charlottesville
	University of Virginia's College at Wise	Wise
	Virginia Commonwealth University	Richmond
	Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University	Blacksburg
	Virginia State University	Petersburg
	Virginia Union University	Richmond
	Wytheville Community College	Wytheville
Vermont	University of Vermont	Burlington
	Vermont Technical College	Randolph Center
Washington	Bellingham Technical College	Bellingham
	Central Washington University	Ellensburg
	Edmonds Community College	Lynnwood

State	Institution Name	City
	Evergreen State College (The)	Olympia
	Green River Community College	Auburn
	Lower Columbia College	Longview
	Pierce College	Lakewood
	Shoreline Community College	Seattle
	Tacoma Community College	Tacoma
	Washington State University	Pullman
Wisconsin	Northcentral Technical College	Wausau
	Northeast Wisconsin Technical College	Green Bay
	University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire	Eau Claire
	University of Wisconsin - Green Bay	Green Bay
	University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse	La Crosse
	University of Wisconsin - Madison	Madison
	University of Wisconsin - Parkside	Kenosha
	University of Wisconsin - Platteville	Platteville
	University of Wisconsin - River Falls	River Falls
	University of Wisconsin - Stout	Menomonie
	Waukesha County Technical College	Pewaukee
West Virginia	Concord College	Athens
	Fairmont State College	Fairmont
	Glenville State College	Glenville
	Marshall University	Huntington
	Potomac State College of West Virginia University	Keyser
	Shepherd College	Shepherdstown
	West Liberty State College	West Liberty
	West Virginia State College	Institute
	West Virginia University	Morgantown
	West Virginia University – Parkersburg	Parkersburg
Wyoming	Central Wyoming College	Riverton
	Eastern Wyoming College	Torrington
	University of Wyoming	Laramie

Source: TAG Program office.

Appendix III: Comments From the Mayor of the District of Columbia

ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS
MAYOR

January 8, 2002

Ms. Cornelia Ashby
Director
U.S. General Accounting Office
Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Ashby:

I have reviewed your office's December 2001 **Draft D.C. Tuition Assistance Grants: Program May Increase College Choices, but Improved Administration Could Expand Grant Accessibility.** We found your report to be very useful. It is filled with excellent data that will help us administer the Tuition Assistance Program more effectively. It is unfortunate that you attached such a negative title to the report, a title that is not borne out by the contents of the report itself.

We in the District of Columbia are very pleased with your findings that the District of Columbia Tuition Assistance Grant Program Office is doing a good job administering the program, that the program has not had a negative impact on enrollment at the University of the District of Columbia, and that institutions of higher education do not have a significant problem with our administration of the program. When this law was passed in November of 1999, few believed that the District could manage the program at all, much less successfully implement it in just nine months. We met, and exceeded that challenge and I am pleased that your report recognizes that we met it well.

In your report, you raise two administrative issues that we would characterize as minor in scope. I would like to respond to each of these issues in turn and then explain why we find the title of your report so misrepresentative of the report itself.

The first administrative practice that the report criticizes is the automatic rejection of students who do not indicate that they will be attending an eligible college. The practice of Tuition Assistance staff in the first two years of the program was to declare as ineligible any applicant who listed only ineligible institutions on his/her application as schools that they were likely to attend. This means that none of the institutions listed on the application were eligible to

participate in the D.C. Tuition Program. Tuition Assistance staff did not process these applicants any further to determine if they met the domicile and other requirements of the program. Applicants who listed no schools on their applications were not automatically declared ineligible.

By declaring students listing all ineligible schools automatically ineligible, the program was saved the administrative burden of fully processing students who were unlikely to use the grant. We also saved the families of these applicants from having to search for domicile documentation (most families did not provide complete supporting documentation upon application) to support the students' applications, only to find themselves unable to use the grants.

Nonetheless, GAO makes a good point. There are a small number of students who will list ineligible schools on their applications and end up attending an eligible school they never mentioned on the application. These students might have been discouraged from attending the eligible school by our ineligibility letter. While our staff speculates that the probability of this happening is very small, if even one student were discouraged from attending college because of an ineligibility letter, that would be one student too many.

We concur with GAO's recommendation that we should fully process all students, even those who give every indication of attending an ineligible institution. However, we will have to write a special letter to accompany these students' letters of eligibility warning them that the schools they listed in the application are all ineligible. We had several cases last year where applicants listed both eligible and ineligible institutions on their application, we declared them eligible, they chose to attend the ineligible institution, and then were upset that we did not award them with a grant. This was despite a clear reference in the letter of eligibility that grants would be awarded only to eligible institutions.

The second GAO criticism is of our practice of advertising that District residents are eligible to receive grants at any public college or university in the nation under the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant Program. This argument makes the point that only institutions that have entered into a written agreement with the District are actually "eligible." This is accurate, but only in a highly technical sense.

The reality is that our program staff has been successful in signing up literally 100% of the institutions that District residents have expressed interest in attending. When students apply to the Tuition Assistance Grant Program for eligibility and list an institution that has yet to sign an agreement with the District on the application, program staff immediately begins a campaign to have the institution sign a program participation agreement. Every single institution where District residents attend has signed an agreement with us. GAO's approach would, in fact, decrease program accessibility. Students would look at our literature, see that the institution they were interested in attending was not listed, and become discouraged from applying for our grant - the very process that alerts us to recruit new schools into the program. We strongly disagree with this GAO recommendation.

Finally, we object to the draft title of this report. Despite our disagreement with one of your recommendations, we feel that, overall, your analysts have written an excellent report that gives us lots of data that we can use to improve the program. Unfortunately, this excellent report is

marred by its title. Nothing in the body of the report suggests that "…Improved Administration Could Expand Grant Accessibility." While agreeing with your recommendation to fully process even those applicants who indicate that they are only thinking about attending ineligible schools, my staff estimate that less than half a dozen persons would be affected by that change. I reiterate, that even one student denied access is one too many. That is why we have agreed with, and will adopt, your recommended course of action. Nonetheless, to headline this report as you have over this minor issue distorts its whole analysis. The other recommendation you make would actually decrease accessibility, discouraging students from applying to colleges and universities simply because no one from the District had attended that institution recently. We strongly urge you to reconsider the title of this report.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need to discuss this response. Please call Laurent Ross, the Director of the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant Program if you have any questions. He can be reached at (202) 727-2814.

Sincerely,

Anthony A. Williams
Mayor of the District of Columbia

AAW/lr

Appendix IV: Comments From the University of the District of Columbia

University of the District of Columbia

Office of the President

January 10, 2002

Michelle C. Verbrugge, Senior Policy Analyst
Education, Workforce, and Income Security
U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO)
441 G Street, N.W., Room 5932-A
Washington, D.C. 20548

Enclosed, please find the comments and requested adjustments officially offered by the University of the District of Columbia regarding the GAO Draft Report – D.C. Tuition Assistance Program – GAO Report Number 02-265. We are very appreciative of the opportunity to review the draft report and, even more, to be able to offer comments and suggested revisions, as may be appropriate.

We particularly note that we have suggested significant adjustments to the Conclusions and Recommendations sections, specifically to add remarks about the program's impact on the University and the need for continued examination of those and other potential impacts. Some of our other comments and suggested adjustments center on insuring that the impact on the University is clearly stated, not just in terms of enrollment numbers, but also in terms of the potential long-term impact on quality – both with respect to the kinds of students the University now and will enroll and the impact of this on our teaching, research, and service missions. Also, given the potentially-wide distribution of the final report, we took the liberty of providing what we consider to be important background information on the University, its legislatively-mandated scope and purpose and its historical record of providing a quality higher education experience for the city's residents. All of these comments and adjustments, we hope you find important to incorporate into the final report document.

Please know that we sincerely appreciate the efforts of the entire GAO review team. We thank you for your attention to some of the critical aspects of the Tuition Assistance Program that may affect the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and we hope that your work will continue in the review of the program beyond the first year of operations as we attempt to get a handle on the kinds of things we must do to strengthen UDC. We ask that you provide us copies of the final report when released.

Again, thank you for your and the review team's efforts and we look forward to continued communications.

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Jenkins
President

4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20008
Telephone (202) 274-5100 • Fax (202) 274-5304 • www.udc.edu

UDC Comments to the GAO Report – D.C. Tuition Assistance Grants

Item	Page #	Suggested Change
"This program …, addresses a concern that D.C. students were at a disadvantage in their postsecondary school choices because D.C. lacks a state university system."	1 (Second sentence)	"This program…addresses a concern that D.C. students are at a disadvantage in their postsecondary school choices because of a ***perception*** that D.C. lacks a state university system., notwithstanding the fact that the University of the District of Columbia was established through the merger of three separate postsecondary institutions and, by federal and District statute, was designed as a comprehensive university system."
(Footnote) "D.C. has only one public postsecondary institution, the University of the District of Columbia."	1 (Footnote)	"D.C. has only one public postsecondary institution, the University of the District of Columbia which, by federal and District statute, is designed to offer a comprehensive university program, similar to a state university system. UDC provides certificate, two-year, four-year, and graduate degree programs and is a member of the Consortium of Universities of the Metropolitan Area which allows UDC students to take course work at all member institutions.
"program on enrollment at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), which is ineligible to participate in the TAG Program because in-state tuition rates are already available to D.C. residents."	2 (top)	"program on enrollment at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), which is ineligible to participate in the TAG Program."
"Twenty-one percent of grant-eligible applicants who did not use the funding to attend a participating college or university may have faced barriers to college access due to factors such as, entrance requirements and the absence of minority outreach programs."	3 (top)	Twenty-one percent of grant-eligible applicants who did not use the funding at attend a participating college or university may have faced barriers to college access due to factors such as entrance requirements and the absence of minority outreach programs, ***or they simply may have chosen to attend an ineligible institution, including UDC.***
…"conducted survey of parents of the 516 applications who were eligible, but did not use their funding - … some applicants decided to postpone college or to attend an ineligible institution in academic year 2000-01, and approximately 51 applied to, but were not accepted at, any	3	*(NOTE: Would have been good to quantify the number enrolling in UDC and other non-eligible institutions by institution).*

institutions participating in the TAG Program"		
"The TAG Program and UDC appeared to serve different freshman populations, and this may account for the minimal impact the TAG Program had on enrollment at UDC. For example, at UDC, the average age of entering freshman was 29 years and most were enrolled part-time; in contrast, in the TAG Program, the average age of entering freshman was almost 20 years and most were enrolled full-time.	4 (Top, 3rd sentence)	"The TAG Program and UDC appeared to serve different populations, and this may account for the minimal impact the TAG Program had on enrollment ***levels*** at UDC. ***However, the TAG Program appeared to have impacted the kind of student now enrolled in UDC.*** For example, ***for the year examined,*** at UDC, the average age of entering freshmen was 29 years and most were enrolled part-time; in contrast, in the TAG Program, the average age of entering freshmen was almost 20 years and most were enrolled full-time. ***However, a closer examination reveals that as an open admission institution, the age span of UDC's freshman class ranges from as low as 17 years to as high as 55 years. In addition, UDC serves a population of District residents who must work, often full time, to sustain themselves and their families and to pay in full for their college education. Therefore, the data on the average age of freshmen are skewed by the wide range of ages and the personal and familial responsibilities UDC's freshmen are likely to have. In the more traditional colleges and universities involved in the TAG program, particularly those without an open admission policy, admission policies generally limit the number of non-traditional, post high school students. Further, in the two years proceeding implementation of the TAG, the UDC's freshmen enrollment comprised half recent high school graduates and half who had been out of high school for several years. Thus, the Tag Program may have significantly impacted the quality of UDC's entering freshmen and these impacts may pose other trickle down effects on the institution. In the recent past, UDC has operated a highly-regarded Honors Program and, according the studies of the National Research Council, it has consistently held a position among the top twenty of all postsecondary institutions in the country whose African American***

		bachelor's degree recipients have gone on to earn the doctorate. In addition, UDC has conducted major federal research programs under which its undergraduates have been mandated to participate in the research and the degree to which its current compliment of students can meet these requirements may have been impacted by this reduction in traditional college-bound students.
"In 1999, Congress enacted the D.C. College Access Act for the purpose of expanding higher education opportunities for college-bound D.C. residents in an effort to stabilize D.C.'s population & tax base."	4 (Background, 1st paragraph)	*(NOTE: What is missing is an analysis of: 1) how many college bound D.C. residents attended eligible institutions in the past (i.e., five year longitudinal), 2) whether or not the TAG Program has effected any significant increase in those numbers, and 3) whether TAG Program recipients are majoring in programs not available at UDC.)*
"UDC is not eligible to participate in the TAG program because in-state tuition rates are already available for D.C. residents."	4 (bottom)-5 (top)	"UDC is not eligible to participate in the TAG program." (NOTE: placing a reason is purely speculative. One could write "***and*** in-state tuition rates are already available for D.C. residents ***enrolling in UDC***" but this, too, appears to provide an unwarranted and misleading justification for excluding UDC from enhancements that were lobbied for under the TAG Program.
D.C. government received $17 million each in FY2000 and FY2001. As of 8/01 had disbursed $11 million in grants & administrative costs. "Consequently, the D.C. government maintains a grant balance of approximately $23 million. The act (P.L. 106-98) states that the funding shall remain available until expended.	5 (middle page)	(NOTE: An interpolation of whether or not the program is over-funded or underutilized could be made in support of lobbied-for enhancements that could have also been made on behalf of UDC, i.e., number of potential college-bound students eligible.)
"... most of the applicants resided in wards 4, 5, and 7 which are located primarily in the northeast and southeast quadrants of D.C."	6 (last sentence) and 8 (chart)	"...most of the applicants resided in Wards 4, 5, and 7 which are located in the ***northwest, near northeast, and far northeast*** quadrants of D.C., ***respectively. These are also the Wards from which UDC has historically drawn the majority of its students."*** *(NOTE: The chart on page 8 needs to read - **Percentage of "College-Age" D.C. Residents.....")***
(Footnote) "An open-admission institution maintains an	9	"An open admission institution maintains an admissions

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admissions policy that allows the school to admit any student that applies to the school."	(Footnote)	policy that allows the school to admit any student ***with a high school diploma or equivalency*** that applies to the school."
"The UDC officials we spoke with believed that the TAG Program would likely have little impact on UDC, in part because of the different student population that UDC serves."	15 (middle paragraph)	"The UDC officials we spoke with believed that the TAG Program would likely have little impact on ***UDC's enrollment level***, in part because of the ***diverse*** student population that UDC serves."
"Almost half of the applicants came directly from high school, with nearly 70 percent of the applicants who recently graduated from high school coming from a D.C. public high school. The remaining applicants were already enrolled in college"	8 (second sentence)	"Almost half of the applicants came directly from high school. Slightly more than half were already enrolled in college. Nearly 70 percent of the applicants coming directly from high school came from a D.C. public high school." (NOTE: The emphasis here is on the fact that the majority of recipients were already in college, thus lessening the perception that UDC's mission may have been minimized.)
Conclusion:	20	***(NOTE: There are no concluding remarks relative to UDC. Please consider adding:)*** ***(Perhaps place first in conclusions):*** ***Notwithstanding the fact that UDC's enrollment level has not suffered significantly because of the TAG Program, the TAG Program appears to have had a significant impact on the general demographic and educational background characteristics of students UDC now serves, with further potential impacts on the comprehensive scope of the institution's mission. Established as a comprehensive university system with a strong academic and liberal arts focus, the institution appears to be losing some of the city's better-prepared college-bound students to the TAG Program. As a result, its long-standing position among the top twenty of all postsecondary institutions whose African American baccalaureate degree recipients go on to earn the doctorate may be jeopardized. Further, as a result in the shift in population makeup of the institution, more financial resources may be required***

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		for UDC to support the resulting remedial and academic support requirements of a students entering the institution who have been outside of the academic arena for long periods. *What is not known is how much it costs, out-of-pocket or through student loans, D.C. residents to attend TAG eligible institutions. Thus, while UDC remains a viable option for many District residents, it appears to remains the only real option for low income and lower-middle income residents.* *In addition, without a longitudinal study of the graduation outcomes of TAG participants, we will not know the true impact or benefit of the TAG program, as UDC has historically received a significant number of transfer students from both traditional and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.* (Later, following the existing text under Conclusions): *Another option for addressing the TAG legislative objective of increasing higher education options for District residents would be to reallocate some of the unutilized TAG funding to the University to expand its program offerings and enhance the quality of its existing ones. It is highly unlikely that the TAG Program could sufficiently increase the number of student participants required to absorb all of its FY 2002 funding (and certainly nor the $23 million carryover balance). Even if the program were to double its student participation, there would be approximately $4 million available to reallocate to the University on an annual basis. In addition to program development and enhancement, these funds could also be used to offer scholarships that prepare District residents for occupations that are in high demand*

		in the District, as well as to District high school graduates that meet specific academic performance requirements, similar to the Hope Scholar's program now in effect in various states.
Recommendations	21	***That continued examination of the impact of the TAG Program on UDC be commissioned, to include a review of its impact on the quality of students enrolled in UDC and qualitative impacts UDC's programs and services, and that future reviews include an examination of the financial impact of TAG on District residents as well as the graduation outcomes of these citizens.*** ***We also recommend that the Congress and the Mayor review the financial requirements of the Tag Program to determine the feasibility of funding appropriated for TAG being fully expended on TAG participants. Should it be determined that TAG funding will not be fully expended, the Congress and the City should consider reallocating surplus Tag funding to UDC for program expansion and enhancement and for scholarship support.***

Appendix V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

Diana M. Pietrowiak, (202) 512-6239
Michelle C. Verbrugge, (202) 512-7242

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, the following individuals made important contributions to this report: Cathy Hurley, Ben Jordan, James Rebbe, Jay Smale, and James P. Wright.

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